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THERE ARE PEOPLE TO BE SERVED

Last month *Christian Community* offered its readers the first of a series of issues devoted to the community outreach of the local congregation. We presented suggestions which might be used in discovering a given congregation's responsibility and a case study of how one church is going about meeting it.

In this issue there is again a general article on the task of the local church and an illustration of a specific type of ministry. When a congregation takes a serious look at its community in the light of its own nature and calling, especially if it uses such guiding questions as were suggested in these columns last month, it is certain to find people who need to be helped.

If your church has not found them, now is a good time to begin looking. Refer to the check list on page 2. You may be wondering about the aging, and Pastor Schiffman's article will offer you suggestions. Perchance, no one is meeting the needs of alcoholics and you will see what help you can get through Alcoholics Anonymous or through state agencies; or you may send your pastor to the Yale School of Alcohol Studies for a better undestanding of the problem. Perhaps your community study will have made you aware of groups other than those on the list. No community lacks for people to be served!

Look At The Program

Next look a your church program to see where you are failing to serve them, or might serve them better: Do we need a worship service at some time other than Sunday morning at 11 for certain workers? Do our fellowship activities discriminate against the working mother or the business and professional woman? What special ministry—and opportunity to minister—do the handicapped, the "delinquent," the migrant worker, or the "shut-in" call for? How should our evangelistic effort be modified to challenge the unskilled worker, the intellectual, the Puerto Rican newcomer, and make him feel at home? Look at the schedule and type of program in each area of the church's work in terms of the needs of the people who are your field.

Then, consider well the best ways of helping them, and the resources you have. What types of ministry can best be undertaken by individuals within the congregation? by the congregation as such? by a group within the church? by the churches working together? Which needs can most wisely be referred to an existing social agency, public or private? Which call for new organizations or agencies? Which groups can be served by consecrated Christian "amateurs," and which call for trained specialists? And if there is a clear call for the church to launch a new program, what are the implications in terms of equipment, personnel, and budget?

Those are some of the challenging facets of a purposeful look around.

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The article on "The Church and the Aging" is by the Reverend Merl Schiffman, pastor of Bethel Evangelical and Reformed Church, Elmhurst, Illinois. Prior to assuming his present responsibility for this new mission project, he served in Gowanda, New York, as Protestant chaplain at the Gowanda State Hospital in addition to his duties as pastor of Trinity Church.

The Church and The Aging

By Merl Schiffman

For the next 15 to 20 years the number of persons in the middle-aged, maximum-income groups will decline, while the greatest increase in our national population will be among those over 65 and under 5. In the over-65 group, though we now have 14.2 million persons, in 1975 there will be 20.7 million. Within this age-section, there are more women than men, and wives than husbands.

No church can ignore this new continent of population nor can it any longer gear its ministry to youth only. In every area of concern, fresh considerations are being given to the matter of aging and older adult needs. Medicine searches for this answer through geriatrics, recreation leaders offer new skills and new forms of play, housing designers present revised floor plans for the elderly, financing agencies are rewriting their contracts, education programs are reshuffled to adult demands, and skilled social workers are wrestling with the new requirements of the retired.

No longer do most men and women wear out at work; the majority rust out in frustrated, empty living. Once work was regarded as earning a living and hence retirement welcomed. Now work provides status, friendships, and meaningful life experiences. "If these elements are lost in retirement, then retirement is an undiluted tragedy", writes Robert J. Havighurst of the University of Chicago.

Church leaders must reshape their approach and program to meet these changing trends. "Older people",

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The Church and The Aging

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"older adults" and "retired" are unhappy labels which ought to be discarded. Educators are referring to "Senior Citizens" and we might well use "Senior Churchmen" as a good identification.

The Church for these folks should stand readily accessible, a symbol of concern. Many of life's supports get lost in advancing years and retirement. Dignity, status and worth are gone. The familiar routines are changed. Feelings of guilt and neglect easily arise while traveling the last part of the road alone. Many adults have lost some parts of themselves — hearing, sight, mobility, and in this framework, adjustment is not simple.

But compensating for these changes are abilities which we had better not overlook. Senior Churchmen are dependable, a quality often in short supply in some churches. They have skills hardly unearthed until a good vocational probe is made by a Talent Committee. Their calmness and loyalty to the church and its work are anchor aids many pastors have yet ot use.

A number of churches are using these compensations through *Senior Churchmen's Clubs* and *XYZ* (Extra Years of Zest) meetings. A few have *Experience, Inc.*—a group of people skilled in professions, arts and services who volunteer their temporary guidance to young folks starting out in the same fields.

Numerous churches were built "when people were young", and are formidable in their physical structure. But wise building and property committees today include senior churchmen who speak for the needs of their contemporaries.

Additional occasions to use Senior Churchmen include designations as Hosts and Greeters on Sunday mornings and at other church gatherings. Because it is of doubtful distinction to honor an "oldest" somebody, pastors instead are scheduling Senior Churchmen's Sunday, Milestone Sunday, and offering 25 and 50 year membership certificates—and not for membership in one specific church but for total years of active church experience.

One of the first efforts to meet this growing need can come from the Social Action Committee of a Church, Women's Guild or Brotherhood. Having no illusions that any one group can satisfy these interests alone, church leaders have sparked city, county, and area gatherings to press for community action. Representatives from Medical, Housing, Social Service, Library, Community Chest, Industry and Labor, Political Units, Recreational and Church groups are called together. Each recognizes its limitations and interest, yet each can share in a common plan to provide for the concerns of all of its Senior Citizens.

Accepting the obligation resting on each group, the church need not, indeed cannot expect to meet every interest of the senior citizens of the community. But it immediately offers its aid in spiritual and moral areas and becomes the instrument to direct its church members into all the avenues of activity provided by the Joint Community Program. Thus the Church activates a continuous interest in this field while concentrating on its contribution to the specific functions for which it is best suited.

Some excellent material provides good background helps for initiating this undertaking:

Aging is a bi-monthly pamphlet from the Supt. of Documents, Washington, which gives a running account of area activities throughout the country.

The Fulfillment Years in Christian Education can be secured from the National Council of Churches, Chicago office.

Public Affairs pamphlets Nos. 131, 139, 182, and 208 are excellent.

One of the best books is *Aging Successfully* (Lawton, Columbia Univ. Press), and the 6th chapter of *The Struggle of the Soul* (Sherrill, Macmillan) must be read.

Through New York State residents a good resource guide and a Bill of Responsibilities and Rights can be secured from the N. Y. State Joint Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging.

The Mature Years (Graded Press, Nashville) and *Senior Citizens* (1701 16th St., NW, Washington 9) are good magazines.

CHECK LIST

The people to be served in your community might include the following. Use this check list to discover which groups are represented and which groups are being reached by your church:

. . . . Adults
. . . . Aging
. . . . Alcoholic
. . . . Children
. . . . Chronic invalids
. . . . Delinquents and pre-delinquents
. . . . Displaced persons
. . . . Divided families
. . . . Handicapped
. . . . Homeless men
. . . . Immigrants or Foreign Language groups
. . . . Migrant workers and families
. . . . Night workers
. . . . Orphans
. . . . Parents
. . . . Paroled prisoners
. . . . Racial minorities
. . . . Striking workers
. . . . Teen agers
. . . . Tenant farmers
. . . . Transients
. . . . Underprivileged
. . . . Unemployed
. . . . Unmarried adults
. . . . Working mothers
. . . . Young adults

Commission Meetings

The fall meeting of the Commission on Christian Social Action was held at Chicago Theological Seminary in connection with a Christian Social Action Institute conducted jointly with the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches. One session was devoted to a panel discussion of Worship and Social Action led by the Reverend Messrs. Herman Reissig, Robert C. Stanger, and Walter Press. Members of the staffs of the two agencies assisted in discussions of the purpose, program, and resources of social action in the local church. A high moment in the week was the Service of Holy Communion conducted by the chairmen of the two agencies, Drs. Elmer J. F. Arndt and Myron Fowell.

The mid-winter meeting of the Commission will be held at Concordia Church, 20th and G Streets, N.W., Washington, D. C., January 31, February 1 and 2. All are invited to participate in a conference on the Church and International Problems, to be held from 10 to 3 on February 1.

THE WITNESS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IN CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORK

By Huber F. Klemme

From an Address before the Assembly of the Division of Christian Life and Work of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., Cleveland, Ohio, October 31, 1955.

How does the local church make its witness in the area of Christian life and work? Perhaps we may approach an answer by asking, How does the local church do anything? What are the characteristic functions of a Christian congregation and how do they serve its responsibility for Christian community service and social action?

1. For one thing, the church *worships*. This is obvious. It is the most obvious thing a congregation does. But the question needs to be asked, Does its worship bring the life of its people into the presence of God for judgment and redemption? Does it express their needs, their real needs, their whole need as men, as members of a community of faith, and as members of many other functional communities as well? Does its worship reflect an awareness of the needs of others? Does it acknowledge the relation of the worshippers to other communities beyond their own? Is the content of prayer and sermon relevant in a Christian manner to the daily experiences and responsibilities of the worshipers? Does it ignore that life? Or does it too easily conform to the uncriticized expectations of the secular world, even sanctify them? If worship is genuine, it is the adoration of God, the Father of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the whole world. It is the self-offering of the community of faith in its entire life. If the local church engages in such worship, it cannot help bring the concerns of the common life before God and thus deepen its own commitment to Christian life and work.

2. In the second place, the church *teaches*. Too many church members, to be sure, are quite ignorant of the social teachings of even their own communion, or unaware that their faith has any bearing on such matters as economic life, citizenship, race relations, or world order. Christian nurture ought not stop with the teens nor with established instruction in the Bible, the catechism, and perhaps a smattering of missions. The reports of the World Council of Churches, such statements as the National Council's "Christian Principles and Assumptions for Economic Life," study courses on international problems, and denominational pronouncements on segregation belong to the local lay Christian as well as to the "professional." The local congregation, through its educational program and its lay organizations, has the grave responsibility as well as the high privilege of bringing to the man in the pew information about our contemporary situation, the thinking of denominational and interdenominational councils, and the understanding of his own obligations as a Christian, a worker, and a citizen.

3. Once again, the church *acts*. Both what it does and how it does it have a bearing on the effectiveness of its witness. Some of its action will be deliberate and planned, as when the congregation sponsors a refugee family, provides needed recreational services for children and youth in its community, takes steps to correct racial discrimination which it has discovered, or tries to get the facts about a local labor dispute. Some of its action will be unplanned and incidental to the way it does the ordinary things most churches do. When it employs a custodian or a secretary, it will have an eye to justice as well as economy. When it lets a contract for printing or building, it will consider not only the amount of the bid but the bidder's business ethics and labor policies as well. When it engages in a community census or an evangelistic visitation, that effort will include every potential individual and family, regardless of racial, national, or economic background. And in any event, a witnessing church will need to be more effectively organized for action than many congregations today are.

4. Finally, the church *is*. Its very existence in the community offers testimony, if the congregation itself is aware of what the church essentially means. As the local and visible manifestation of the Body of Christ, much in every way depends upon it. So the Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches observed that "the influence of worshiping congregations upon the problems of society is very great when those congregations include people from many social groups." A church can be an inclusive cross-section stimulating health and fraternity in the community, —or it can be just another sociologically homogeneous group in which the complacency and isolation of individual members is reinforced. It can be critical, creative, and courageous,—or it can be conventional, conformist, and quiescent. But finally, by what this local congregation is or fails to be, the church bears or fails to bear its appointed witness in Christian life and work.

IN RETROSPECT

Ten years ago Dr. Huber F. Klemme became the first executive secretary of the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. It was not a new field for him. He had been associated with the Commission from its inception. In fact he had evidenced his leadership ability and his keen understanding of social problems before we became a united church. It was my privilege to be associated with him in those days, in the former Indiana District of the Evangelical Synod of North America. I believe he and I served on the first committee on Christian Social Action of that district. It has been a constant marvel to me how over these years he has remained steadfast in his set purpose to interpret the Christian gospel in its relevancy to all of the areas of modern life with their increasing perplexity.

Since that early beginning many changes have occurred and churches are gradually, but only gradually, accepting the role of prophetic witnessing in a world of frustrating social situations. Whatever progress we as a domination have made, much of it must in a large measure be attributed to Dr. Klemme's leadership. That leadership is equally as much appreciated in interdenominational circles. He has given unsparingly of himself to a most difficult task; the charting of the course of Christian social action. He has shown himself competent in both the administration of his office and in the incisiveness with which he has made us see social issues. His courage has stood him in good stead and he has accepted criticism without allowing it to affect this devotion to the cause which he serves.

At the September meeting of the Commission on Christian Social Action, that body took due note of his ten years of service and adopted approprite resolutions expressing their appreciation of his services. May God continue to grant him strength and joy in his difficult field as he continues to direct the work of our denomination in Social Action.

Henry C. Koch,
Member,
Commission on Christian Social Action

CHURCHES VIEW TASK IN SOCIAL WELFARE

After three years of planning, the National Conference on the Churches and Social Welfare, sponsored by the Department of Social Welfare and the Division of Home Missions of the National Council of Churches, met in Cleveland, November 1 to 4 inclusive. Official delegates appointed by 31 member denominations and observers from other churches and various organizations took part.

The range of interest represented in this conference may be inferred from the titles of the discussion sections into which the conference divided: Child Welfare; Family Welfare; Health and Medical Care; Services to Groups in Settlements, Hostels, Neighborhood Houses, and Local Churches; Pastoral Care and Chaplain Services; Social Education, Action, and Research; City Mission Society; Rural Church Welfare Services; and Services to Special Groups. The Evangelical and Reformed Church was represented by 50 delegates chosen from the membership of the Commission on Christian Social Action, Board of National Missions, the Commission on Benevolent Institutions, and other interested agencies.

A particularly significant event of the week was a fellowship dinner attended by over 100 official delegates of the Evangelical and Reformed and the Congregational Christian Churches, who heard representatives of various agencies discuss the Socail Welfare program of the two communions.

In preparation for the conference, two research volumes dealing with the involvement of the churches in the health and welfare field, and the current trends, respectively, were prepared. In addition to the full conference report there will be a study booklet based on these reports for lay people.

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HOLD HEARINGS ON IMMIGRATION LAW

Senator Harley M. Kilgore, Chairman of the United States Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization, has announced that public hearings will be held by the subcommittee in the Senate Office Building, Washington 25, D. C., commencing November 21, 1955.

The hearings will be concerned with fundamental national policies expressed in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, experience under the Act, and a consideration of several pending Senate bills to amend the Act, in whole or in part.

The General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1953 took action favoring the revision of the present law in the following resolution:

"The General Synod, mindful of our nation's heritage as a refuge for the aspiring and oppressed of all lands, calls upon the Congress of the United States to revise the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (Public Law 414) so as: (a) to permit a more flexible use of unfilled quotas by refugees from tyranny, disaster, and poverty; (b) to eliminate such racist restrictions as charge persons of Asiatic ancestry against the quota of their ancestors' country rather than their own; and (c) to provide for a system of fair hearings and appeals which will protect both the immigrant and the naturalized citizen from the arbitrary power of officials to refuse a visa or carry out deportation proceedings."

Individuals, groups, and organizations are encouraged to express their convictions concerning the present law and proposed revisions by letter or by formal statement to be filed with the Committee.

The principal Senate bills currently under consideration are S. 519 (Ives-Saltonstall-Case); S. 1206 (Lehman et al); S. 1315 (Humphrey-Douglas-Kennedy-McNamara).

Speaking of Books

A new book, *The People Act,* by Elmore McKee (Harper, $3.50), will be of interest to people in many American communities who are faced with serious problems, and would like to know what other people did under similar circumstances.

The stories were developed from materials collected for a series of radio programs on "The People Act". There were thirty-eight radio stories; only eleven of them are reproduced here. The book shows how Americans in a variety of cities, towns and counties joined voluntarily to solve their community problems and achieved important changes: Bat Cave, North Carolina, worked for a hospital; Baltimore sought for better housing; citizens of Gary, Indiana, organized to fight crime; Virginians in Arlington found a way to get better schools; people of Seattle, Washington, settled some of their race problems. Here is some fine human interest stuff which may be full of valuable suggestions to church people.

F. N. S.

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The Church Peace Union has recently published a highly stimulating booklet on *The United Nations: New Perspectives,* written by Dr. Alfred J. Hotz. Dr. Hotz, son and brother of Evangelical and Reformed ministers, is chairman of the Department of Political Science at Western Reserve University and a member of the Department of International Affairs of the National Council of Churches. He offers us a treatment of both the possibilities and the limitations of the United Nations in the framework of the total problem of diplomacy and international politics, in a way that should not only confound its critics but also give its supporters a more sober perspective. Some readers may feel that the earlier chapters make too much of national rights, security, and balance of power. However, these are the knotty problems that must be faced if the UN is to be effective as one of the major instruments for world community and peace. The booklet may be secured at the bargain price of 35 cents from the Church Peace Union, 170 East 64th Street, New York 21, New York.

H. F. K.

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An inter-faith statement on *American Abundance and World Need* was recently issued over the names of 94 Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders. It is available from C. Arild Olsen at 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. on request.